

## Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

March 3, 2009 – 6:00 PM  
Conference Room B  
Rockford City Hall

**Present:** Laura Bachelder, Tom Graceffa, David Hagney, Mark McInnis, Maureen Flanagan, Sally Faber

**Absent** Ald. Doug Mark

**Staff:** Ginny Gregory, Reid Montgomery

**Others:** Christopher Anderson, Larson & Darby Group; Dr. Alan Brown, Burpee Museum of Natural History; Scott Feirn, Kishwaukee Street Properties

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### Meeting of the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

#### Approval of Minutes

Sally Faber made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes for the meeting of February 3, 2009 as submitted. The motion was seconded by David Hagney and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### Certificate of Appropriateness – 737 North Main Street (Burpee Museum of Natural History)

Christopher Anderson from Larson & Darby Group referenced the drawings prepared by Larson & Darby and submitted with the application. The proposed addition is approximately 14,690 sq ft, located towards the rear of the site. It will be attached to the Solem wing and be a connecting addition between the Burpee Museum and the Discovery Center Museum to the south. The addition contains exhibit halls, classroom space, multi-purpose space and more. The proposed addition is intended to match the existing Solem wing addition in regards to color and materials used.

Chris discussed the proposed patio area located behind the building along the waterfront. Chris pointed out the dark dashed line toward the bottom of his plan drawing L1.0, explaining that this separates the Riverwalk project of the City of Rockford and work related to the new addition to Burpee. He also pointed out the red on this plan drawing indicates the number of trees that would be moved or removed, five of which were over 18 inches. He further explained his proposal was attempting to save a 30 inch tree directly east of the proposed addition, which would create a raised patio area.

Chris then directed the Commission to plan drawing L1.1. This drawing was a close-up view of the back of the addition, showing more of the proposed landscaping. There were several proposed trees just north of the Solem addition as well as along the drive to the patio area with ornamental groundcover along the patio edge.

Next Chris described the drawing on sheet A3, showing the building elevations. This includes a proposed sign at the back of the building as indicated on the top of the drawing that would be visible from the riverfront, Riverwalk, and both bridges. The sign is approximately 46'x 6'8".

Tom Graceffa asked how the sign was lit. Chris replied there would be lights hanging off the façade lighting up the sign, similar to the current façade lighting. Ginny Gregory asked if the sign would be lit from the ground or above. Chris replied his team was still working on the best way to light the sign but was leaning toward lighting from below. He proposed something that would be hung from \_\_\_\_\_.

Mark McInnis expressed concern over the height of the proposed addition in comparison to the existing buildings. He said there was pretty strong continuity in the front of the house but it gets lost at the back. He believed the proposed addition strayed from 19<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics. He believed the overall look was too minimalistic, and matched better with the building next to it rather than the original building. Chris replied there was a gradual change noticeable from Main Street which is aided by the landscaping. He didn't believe anyone would greatly notice the building changes. Chris explained there was a wall with ornate landscaping to soften the image. Mark stated the proposed building did not have the design elements visible in early 1900 design, and was an extreme case of modern building architecture overshadowing historical neighborhoods.

Laura asked if there was a reason the proposed building had the window design as it was, with a stark look to it. Dr. Brown replied the area was for exhibits and the window lighting was designed for the benefit of future exhibits. Dr. Brown further stated if windows were placed in the front it would be very expensive to add the proper glazing required for the exhibit. Chris stated he would have no issues adding detail elements from the Solem addition to the proposed addition. Mark asked if it was possible to take the front elevation and add an additional wall in front of it, creating a corridor with proper windows, which should not disturb the gallery. Dr. Brown stated the addition is as close as they want to come to the ginko tree about 40' away. Any closer would interfere with the root zone of the tree.

Mark asked if the façade is about 100' east of the front of the building. Chris replied it was. Mark wondered why the façade couldn't be hidden. Chris replied that would be a lot more than simply covering someone's air conditioner. David indicated there were two schools of thought on architecture. One was to have additions to historical buildings be minimalist so that the original house is the focus. The other thought was to mimic the historical building's design, generally doing a bad job at it. David believed the old addition overwhelms the original house so much it distracts from the house. He believed by adding a new addition with minimalist architecture it would make the house stand out more. He further stated one doesn't really see the gap between the Natural History Museum and the Art Museum. With evergreens and perhaps some ivy growing on the walls he didn't think it would be that noticeable. Dr. Brown stated that was his belief as well. With the ginko tree in full bloom, the berm in place for the tunnel, and a grade drop, there was a very small gap between the mansion and the Discovery Center. The best view would be on a boat in the river.

Mark then asked if the addition was designed for people in a car passing by or those stopping and going in to the museum. Mark understood what David was stating regarding the minimalist approach not to detract from the building; however, he believed a good faith effort to mimic the look of the original mansion was important. He was strongly against a blank wall for the front of the museum.

Sally stated the addition causes the entire look to become more hodge podge. She stated there was so much detail in the last addition, you almost need to carry on with the new addition to maintain a semblance of unity. She stated even though there was a grade difference and the tree hides some of the proposed addition even some detail should be necessary for the flow.

David asked how far into construction the plans were. Chris replied they were just starting on them. David asked if it was possible to mimic glazed windows or expand the porch, something to continue the look of the original house. Horizontal banding was thought necessary by several members of the commission. Mark suggested adding something similar to the fossil designs that are embedded in the columns of the Solem wing.

David pointed to the small door at the front of the addition and asked if that was an emergency exit door. Chris replied the door served no function at all.

Mark asked what was going on with the chiller path. Chris replied there would be a chiller there. He further stated the plan would be revised to put the patio between two buildings where it wouldn't be seen. Ginny asked if the proposed patio would be stamped concrete. Chris replied currently it was standard concrete but could be stamped. The proposed retaining walls will be built to match the existing retaining walls looking like natural stone.

Mark asked how the patio would be lit from the outside. Chris replied they intended to use similar fixtures as used on the Riverwalk, requiring lighting to come in later for a separate Certificate. Dr. Brown expressed his excitement with the Riverwalk and stated Burpee's amphitheater, which would hold approximately 200 people, would be a boon to the area. The boardwalk will also be quite a sight.

Mark stated he wasn't sure about the round window in the back of the building in the drawing. Chris stated the nature of the round was so iconic they didn't want to replicate it. Dr. Brown stated it wasn't really a window, it was the exterior wall to the Jane exhibit.

Mark stated the Commission doesn't have a problem with the river façade. He asked what the construction schedule was. Dr. Brown stated they hoped to get the bids out in May and start construction in June. Consensus among Commission members was to ask for more detail on the west façade so it is not just a blank wall.

Mark McInnis made a **MOTION** to **lay over** the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The motion was seconded by Maureen Flanagan and **CARRIED** by a vote of **6-0**.

### **Approval of Economic Impact Booklet**

Ginny asked the Commission to officially give the booklet their approval. She stated she distributed the booklet at the last meeting.

Ginny stated she sent out bids last week to have the booklet printed, and they are due Friday, March 6, 2009. When the booklet is printed it will be sent to all historic designated properties, with several saved for realtors and anyone else who would like one. A digital copy will be posted on [www.rockfordil.gov](http://www.rockfordil.gov) . She asked if the Commission would let her know if anyone else needed a copy.

David Hagney made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the economic impact booklet. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of **6-0**.

#### **Violation Notice – 401-417 Kishwaukee Street**

Scott Feirn indicated these properties were part of a package purchase by Sclar Investments. While he indicated they were planning on improving them, he did not have a definite timeline for those improvements. Last year there was some scraping done but they learned that what was done was not sufficient to do the job correctly. They were informed by painters they were wasting their time priming then as they would have to redo it in the spring. He was hoping they could get an extension for 6 months for the weather to improve.

Scott wasn't sure how to proceed with window improvements. He mentioned some owners were using glass block windows in basement windows, but he didn't think that was allowed. He wondered if regular windows were needed on the front and glass block at the back.

Scott indicated he met with Sara Bell on color schemes and received some ideas but has not yet purchased paint. Ginny stated this Commission doesn't regulate color, they just want the properties painted. She mentioned Scott was welcome to bring in paint chips and ask for advice, but it would only be advice. David thought Sara Bell would have better coloring advice than the Commission. Scott stated Sara had hinted at the properties on North First just off Jefferson, which were painted in browns and dark greens.

Scott asked about the time for repairs. Ginny indicated as long as Neighborhood Standards sees some progress, they will work with Sclar and allow time for completion. Scott asked if that was Jim Vronch's division. Ginny replied it was. Scott replied he spoke to Jim on a couple of other issues where he had received violation notices on and would speak to Jim regarding these two properties.

Ginny reminded Scott he submitted a certificate for the metal doors but hadn't stated what he was going to replace the doors with. She reminded him to contact her before putting anything in. Scott replied the door going out has a stairwell right outside it and to push the door open to the outside leaves maybe 18" so an exterior opening type of door would be necessary. Scott believed it would be better to see a nice door there not a screen door.

Mark asked how many of these houses were occupied. Scott replied none currently. The house on the corner was occupied for a couple of months over the winter. The house at 417, next to the railroad tracks, was occupied most recently.

Mark asked how the window got removed from the second floor of 407 Kishwaukee. Scott replied it must have been the tenant as he hadn't been in the house for awhile. Mark asked when the last tenant was in the house. Scott believed it was the summer. Mark stated the window was removed in the fall, 2008. Scott stated the only items that may have been removed from these houses were by theft. Scott further stated he put plastic on the inside of the windows to help weatherize the house.

Mark informed Scott he was the neighborhood president and the residents in the area have watched these properties consistently deteriorate. The lack of paint on the properties is causing

them to rot. Mark thought it likely drug dealers inhabit the property as they are unsecured. He further stated his disbelief of the owner not understanding these homes were in a historic district as there is a large sign as you enter the neighborhood indicating the area was in Haight Village, an historic district.

Scott asked if there was a list of the properties included in Haight Village. Ginny replied she has mailing labels she uses. Scott asked if he could have access to the labels. Ginny told him to file a Freedom of Information Act. She indicated the borders were Walnut Street on the north, Kishwaukee Street, the railroad, and Madison Street. David asked what Scott needed the labels for. Scott replied the cost for repairing the homes was too high, and wanted to ask the residents if they could volunteer time to paint the homes.

Ginny informed Scott any railing changes, or anything that would be different from what is currently on the properties and visible from the right-of-way, would require him to submit a certificate of appropriateness application to this Commission for the design and material used for the railings. As the railings did not meet building codes, he would have to change them. Scott asked if this included repairs of windows. Ginny replied if he was repairing a window and not changing the way it looks or the materials it is made of then no application would be necessary.

Sally clarified this problem began a year ago. Ginny agreed. Sally stated the timeframe for repairs was very generous since the first letter in January 2008 indicated the owners had until October 2008 to complete the repairs and nothing was done. She believed the time frame on some of the issues should be moved up as weather changes wouldn't affect all the repairs such as the roof over the porch on one of the properties.

Mark commented Scott didn't seem to have the motivation for repairing the properties. Scott answered he would love to improve the properties, however he was financially limited. Ginny replied many of the problems were standard code violations having nothing to do with being in a historic district. Scott replied painting wasn't a problem, but replacing would the correct way is probably not going to happen.

Mark asked if Scott thought about selling the properties. Scott replied he had. Mark stated if funding was an issue then Scott should explore the option of selling the properties. Ginny mentioned if the properties go for sale the owner would need to inform the residents of the violations against it. Sally stated Scott could price the properties accordingly.

Ginny informed Scott he had until the end of April to complete the issues on the certificate of appropriateness. She suggested he begin with one of the smaller houses and complete all work by June. She indicated some of the foundations were in bad shape and may require extensive work. David stated he would like to see the houses completed one at a time, but feels a deadline should be in place. David mentioned a progress report would help keep things on track. Ginny informed Scott the Code Enforcement Division will probably ask for a progress report as well so he could just create one progress report that mentions all progress and turn that in to both Code Enforcement and the Historic Preservation Commission. Ginny indicated she would check with Code Enforcement to find out when their hearing dates are so she can make sure Scott can get something in to both. Sally suggested an informal contact method as progress is made, even an email would be appropriate so this Commission could stay on top of the situation. Mark asked if photos could be included in the progress report. Ginny indicated she would take photographs of the properties.

Scott asked for some feedback on the basement windows. Mark informed Scott he must do something similar to what is currently on the house, but for security purposes he could install some interior bars. Ginny mentioned he needs to be aware of building code issues on any repair, as you need to be able to get out the windows. She further stated any repairs not visible from the street do not concern of this Commission. She recommended Scott ask Code Enforcement for suggestions as there were egress issues.

Maureen Flanagan made a **MOTION** to **REQUIRE** repairs to the Kishwaukee Properties be completed by September 1, 2009, with monthly progress reports as a standing agenda item until then. The motion was seconded by Sally Faber and **CARRIED** by a vote of **6-0**.

#### **Violation Notice – 904 North Prospect**

Ginny informed the Commission that property owner Jim Pantazelos is in Dallas, Texas but he did call this afternoon. The vinyl siding will be removed from the garage and wood siding replaced on the house and garage by the end of the month. An application for a certificate of appropriateness will be submitted to replace three metal doors. Ginny told him that was acceptable.

[Maureen left at this time. ]

#### **Possible National Register nomination, the Laurent House**

Ginny informed the Commission that John Cook is completing the nomination forms. This is the only Frank Lloyd Wright house in the city. If John can get the nomination approved through the IHPA staff, Ginny believed it will be approved. Ginny mentioned the organization is looking for funding, if anyone wanted to donate.

#### **Staff report**

Ginny stated the 2009 grant for the Armory was approved and she is waiting for the paperwork back from the State. Mark asked if the grant was for environmental clean up. Ginny indicated it was for a Phase I and Phase II environmental assessment and a work plan for remediation, but does not cover any actual remediation. Mark asked the amount of the grant. Ginny replied it was \$14,000 total, but the entire project is \$20,000 with a 70/30 reimbursement.

Ginny stated the annual report had been sent to all members of the Commission. She is missing any training information and asked the group if any of them had attended any training related to historic preservation. Ginny mentioned one of the requirements for maintaining a Commission as a Certified Local Government was that a member or staff had to attend some form of training related to preservation during the year. David asked if "Green Buildings" training would count. Ginny replied it would and asked him to e-mail her stating he took this training.

Ginny also stated she had left out expiring term dates of members which include Laura and Maureen in April. Ginny assumed there would be no new appointments until after the elections

in April. Ginny indicated she had verified with Legal it would be appropriate for Laura and Maureen to continue, as long as they were willing, until new members were appointed.

David asked if there was any place he could look up tax credits for insulating your home. Sally believed she might have some information and indicated she would check.

Ginny stated she received a request to vacate part of Ethel Avenue that is east of Prospect which is a paper street. Mark asked if this would go through City Council. Ginny replied it would. She further stated Public Works is talking with the owners. Ginny indicated one of the reason Public Works wants to speak with the owner is to point out one of the driveways is in this right-of-way. She wasn't sure if the owner realized when he vacates his driveway will go to his neighbor. No one had any objections to the proposed vacation.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20p.m.